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## Newsletter - 1976-04-29

E. De la Garza

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FROM: Kika de la Garza

Washington, D C

RURAL POST OFFICES and the Postal Service's threat to close them down throughout the country will be the subject of committee hearings early in May. I will be there to speak as vigorously as I know how against this latest no-service move of the Postal Service. And I will use as evidence to back up my case some of the letters I have received from South Texans who depend heavily upon the rural post offices. All of us agree on the need for economy. We are trying to balance the federal budget, but we need to line up our priorities, and closing small rural post offices which are not a burden on the budget in relation to the services they perform is not the way to economize.

\* \* \*

A SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION of \$5.6 million for the U S Customs Service during the current fiscal year, ending June 30, has been recommended by the House Committee on Appropriations. In testimony before a subcommittee recently, I urged the necessity of additional funds being made available to enable the Customs Service to carry out its assigned duties along the U S - Mexico border. The Committee also recommended an appropriation of \$3.1 million for the transition period (July through September) made necessary by the change in the beginning of each fiscal year in the future.

Much legislation has been passed, the committee pointed out, which consumes both financial and personnel resources but for which no funds have been appropriated. Its report noted that there will be an increase in workload related to the Bicentennial and the drug problem. The supplemental appropriation will provide funds for an additional 300 positions and equipment to help process the increased flow of visitors into the U S and guard our borders and ports of entry from the smuggling of contraband into the country. The funds will also permit the opening and staffing of ports of entry at high security locations. This measure now goes to the Senate.

\* \* \*

A VISITOR to my Washington office recently spoke in a very generous fashion to a member of my staff about the various plaques and framed testimonials hanging in our reception room. "I've never seen so many tributes to a man," he said. But of course they aren't tributes to me as a person but to the people generally of the 15th Congressional District. I know that.

The display makes me realize, every time I look at it, how much I owe to the folks who have made me their Representative in Congress. There are certificates attesting to the value of the efforts we have made, working together, in the fields of education, water and soil conservation, agricultural research, veterans' affairs, the fishing industry, and so on. Several keys to cities presented to me hang in the reception room. And there are many other mementos.

Every one of them reminds me of good friends and heartwarming occasions. And the sight of them every day strengthens my determination to do the best I can for the finest people in the world.

\* \* \*

A COMPUTER SYSTEM that in minutes can locate the Federal assistance available for a rural community will soon be in nationwide use, according to information I have received from the Department of Agriculture.

South Texas will be on the network, which is called the Federal Assistance Program Retrieval System. It will have the capacity to scan a data bank of more than 600 Federal domestic assistance programs and print out a list of those which are applicable to a specific community.

This service will be available through existing compatible computer terminals operated by the Agriculture Department, other Federal and State agencies and organizations such as multi-county planning and development organizations. Department officials estimate that within a year as many as 500 such terminals may be in operation. As field terminals go into operation and the system is ready for use, announcements will be made.

A word of caution may be in order. The computer system obviously can't move every applicant to the front of the line. Availability of assistance will continue to depend on program funding levels and priorities among eligible applicants. And the system will never have the effect of slowing down my own efforts to help South Texas communities get available Federal assistance for constructive projects.

\* \* \*

A DECISION of great interest to the Valley has been made by the Agricultural Research Service to redirect the sum of \$37,400 from another location to fund a position at Weslaco on fruit and vegetable transportation research. The ARS Administration has assured me that the Southern Regional Office of the Service will fill the position as soon as possible.

Continuing research on the transportation and packaging of fruits and vegetables is of vital importance to our area. The ARS Administrator told me that Dr William W Carter of the Weslaco station is working with other Service offices to develop and carry forward a continuing research program to solve some of these industry problems.

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VISITORS FROM HOME. Visiting my office from home this week were: Mr and Mrs Ralph C Reyes Jr of Edinburg; Mr Jack Nelson of Harlingen; and Mr Scott Toothaker of McAllen; and Amos Welder Jr of Beeville.